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Opinion

The arena feud

We've never questioned the proposed \$75 million state investment in construction of a new sports arena in Louisville to be the home court for the University of Louisville basketball.

A sports arena will be good for the Louisville economy, and what's good for the Louisville economy is good for Kentucky's economy as well.

That's why state tax dollars have been good investments in everything from the ever-expanding state fairgrounds to the Kentucky Center for the Arts.

But what started out last year as an exciting arena development idea has turned into a Louisville version of the Hatfields and McCoys feud over where exactly the arena should be located, either on the riverfront or a few blocks away.

Those couple of city blocks now threaten to scuttle the state appropriation to pay for the \$75 million bond issue for the arena. The riverfront site arena will cost more than \$100 million more than the secondary site.

The Jefferson County legislative delegation is divided on the issue.

The authority created by Gov. Ernie Fletcher to oversee planning and construction of a riverfront arena this week suspended operations over potential liabilities.

Tomorrow the House budget committee is expected to vote on its version of the state's two-year spending plan. At one point recently, it appeared certain the \$75 million for the arena would be in that plan. Now there's no certainty about anything.

Until there is certainty about the arena site, the total cost of the project and the support of Louisville and Jefferson County legislators, community and government leaders, we believe it would be a mistake to commit scarce state tax dollars to the project when those dollars are needed elsewhere, both in Louisville and throughout the state.

Perhaps that is still possible before the legislative session ends, and a final state budget is adopted by both the House and Senate.

We certainly hope it is, but in the meantime, until our urban Hatfields and McCoys can settle their differences, this is one feud Frankfort should steer clear of.